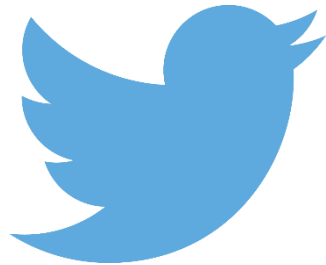




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# Re-mobilising services post lockdown. Cemeteries and Crematoria

The restrictions implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are being lifted, and local government services are now looking to remobilise their services

APSE Remobilisation working groups were established to highlight the plans that councils are considering, and currently implementing.

Remobilisation reports cover four key areas:

- Operational activity
- Regrouping the workforce
- Budget, finance and re-establishing commercial activity
- Technical Considerations

# Operational changes

Whilst some council services had limited or ceased their operations, cemeteries and crematoria services have been working at heightened levels.

- Redeployed staff to support grave digging.
- Issuing of PPE/ reduced contact with coffins and mourners
- Move to limiting number of mourners attending services – social distancing
- Ceasing none essential services - BoR, internment of ashes, genealogical services
- In some cases closing of chapels and in Northern Ireland closure of cemetery grounds.
- Reduced service times to allow additional cleansing of chapels.

## Operational Changes (2)

- Closure of car parks and early locking of cemetery gates.
- Trolleys to transport coffins as opposed to manual carrying in order to protect staff from contamination
- Removal of soil boxes in order to prevent cross-contamination.
- Pre – digging of graves.

# Re-grouping the workforce

- Many of these redeployed staff were trained in grave-digging and support for the administration of burials, creating a wider pool of staffing resource which could be drawn upon to cover COVID-19 related absence, such as staff needing to self-isolate, and meet higher demands – key for future spikes.
- Concerns about availability of qualified crematoria technicians through sickness or self-isolation measures. Protection from mourners and future training identified.
- Councils have set up facilities for office staff to work from home and divert the phone lines to mobile numbers, thereby reducing exposure of staff to the public
- Rotas, staff segregation, PPE and increased hand washing facilities.
- Most staff operational throughout pandemic therefore no real need for major re-mobilisation – mental health considerations?

# Budget, finance and re-establishing commercial activity

- Key objective to meet the increased needs of the bereaved – therefore income generating activities put on hold. (e.g. memorialisation, BoR).
- Governments' promise to reimburse councils for costs associated with COVID-19. Still a degree of uncertainty as to whether this reimbursement will cover all lost income.
- Reductions in the service offered, e.g. shorter service times in order to allow cleaning between services has led some councils to reduce their charges to families or offer free services such as webcasts.
- Lifting of the lockdown – families may have delayed funeral services and ashes internments therefore purchasing memorialisation later.
- Concern that costs of redeployed staff used during the pandemic, may be charged to their service budgets later in the year.



# Technical Considerations

- Most councils felt that there should not be any significant problems in bringing facilities and operational equipment back online as most had been maintaining, or using such technology on a daily basis.
- Future training needs for non-bereavement staff to cover absences/sickness.
- If social distancing is still in place, then restrictions such as limited mourner numbers may still be required – reconfiguring of chapels to allow increased number of mourners.

# Changes in service delivery

- Speed of service change and innovation have been notable. An example is the adoption of electronic 'paperwork' which has been significantly progressed in many bereavement services.
- Electronic forms are now becoming more acceptable to many bereavement services – result of the need for social distancing.
- Some still consider it necessary to have paper copies for records, which have to be stored for up to 15 years. Concerns about the need for accuracy and security when printing off documents/ separate file storage systems for bereavement data.
- Success of working from home during the pandemic has further strengthened the call for more electronic paperwork and records
- Many authorities are now looking at increasing the opportunities to digitise administrative processes and indexing of records





**APSE Cemeteries and Crematoria  
Services remobilisation report**



# Cemeteries and Crematoria Remobilisation Report (June 2020)

<https://www.apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/news/articles/2020/covid-19-apse-information-hub/remobilisation-reports/cemeteries-and-crematoria/cemeteries-and-crematoria/>

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